

Message Text

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ACTION OC-06

INFO OCT-01 AF-10 ISO-00 CCO-00 SY-05 /022 W

-----053382 142206Z /64

R 141310Z JUL 77

FM AMEMBASSY MASERU

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7273

INFO AMEMBASSY NAIROBI

AMEMBASSY GABORONE

AMEMBASSY MBABANE

AMEMBASSY PRETORIA

AMCONSUL JOHANNESBURG

AMCONSUL CAPETOWN

AMCONSUL DURBAN

UNCLAS MASERU 1015

DEPT ALSO FOR AF/EX

FROM CHARGE'

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: AMTC, ASEC, LT

SUBJECT: TLEPHONES

1. IN THE AGE OF INSTANT COMMUNICATIONS, COMPUTERS, SATELLITES, AUTOMATIC DIAL TELEPHONES, ETC., THIS EMBASSY HAS, FOR THE PAST YEAR, EXPERIENCED A SITUATION IN WHICH IT HAS BEEN IMPOSSIBLE, FOR MUCH OF THE TIME, TO BE REACHED BY TELEPHONE BY ANYONE EVEN IN THE CITY OF MASERU MUCH LESS THE OUTSIDE WORLD. WE HAVE RECENTLY, FOR A THREE-WEEK PERIOD, HAD ONE LINE OUT OF FOUR ON WHICH WE COULD MAKE OUTGOING CALLS ONLY. ORDINARY BUSINESS TRANSACTIONS HAVE BEEN REDUCED TO SOMETHING REMINISCENT OF THE PRE-ALEXANDER GRAHAM BELL PERIOD; A FARCICAL SITUATION WHICH DERIVES FROM FACTORS GOVERNING THE EMBASSY'S TELEPHONE

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INSTALLATION.

2. THE EMBASSY'S TELEPHONE SYSTEM IS UNIQUE IN LESOTHO AND CANNOT BE SERVICED BY THE LESOTHO P & T PERSONNEL DUE TO THEIR LACK OF FAMILIARITY AND TRAINING WITH THIS EQUIPMENT. IN FACT, AS I UNDERSTAND IT, SECURITY CONSIDERATIONS IMPOSE ON US A RESTRICTION AGAINST UTILIZING HOST COUNTRY TELEPHONE PERSONNEL

TO SERVICE THE SYSTEM.

3. AS A RESULT OF THE FOREGOING SITUATION, THE EMBASSY IS DEPENDENT, AS ARE ALL OTHER AREA POSTS I BELIEVE, ON THE SERVICES OF THE REGIONAL COMMUNICATIONS OFFICER IN NAIROBI. THE RCO'S RESPONSIBILITIES INCLUDE THE INSTALLATION AND MAINTENANCE OF TELEPHONE SYSTEMS FOR A LARGE NUMBER OF POSTS IN EAST AND SOUTHERN AFRICA AND FROM OUR MANY COMMUNICATIONS, IT IS CLEAR THAT HE IS A PERSON OF GOOD WILL AND BEST INTENTIONS. HOWEVER, SINCE HE APPARENTLY HAS ONLY ONE TECHNICIAN ASSIGNED TO HIS OFFICE AND THE NUMBER OF CALLS FOR SERVICE AND INSTALLATION ARE LEGION. WE AND MANY OTHER POSTS WAIT IN VAIN FOR ASSISTANCE.

4. ABOUT A YEAR AGO, BEFORE MY ARRIVAL AT POST, THE EMBASSY ASKED THE RCO TO SEND SOMEONE HERE TO INSTALL TELEPHONES IN A CHANCERY EXTENSION. THREE MONTHS LATER A TECHNICIAN CAME AND SURVEYED THE SITUATION AND IN MARCH THIS YEAR THE EQUIPMENT FOR THE NEW INSTALLATION ARRIVED. HOWEVER, NO ONE HAS COME TO INSTALL THE EQUIPMENT DESPITE OUR NUMEROUS PLEAS. IN ADDITION, THE EXISTING PHONE SYSTEM HAS BEEN PARTIALLY OR TOTALLY INOPERATIVE OFF AND ON THROUGHOUT MY TENURE AND DESPITE NUMEROUS REQUESTS EXPRESSING UTMOST URGENCY, NO ONE HAS COME TO REPAIR THE SYSTEM. IT IS QUITE CLEAR THAT THE RCO IS SWAMPED WITH WORK AND, THEREFORE, WE QUITE SIMPLY HAVE NO EFFECTIVE TELEPHONE REPAIR AND INSTALLATION RESOURCE.

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5. IT IS TIME THE DEPARTMENT REALIZED THAT THE PRESENT TELEPHONE INSTALLATION AND MAINTENANCE SYSTEM IN SOUTHERN AFRICA IS TOTALLY INADEQUATE. IN FACT, THIS MAY ALREADY HAVE BECOME APPARENT SINCE WE HEAR THAT THE RCO MAY SOON HAVE A SECOND TECHNICIAN ASSIGNED TO HIS OFFICE. QUITE APART FROM THAT, HOWEVER, IT IS MY VIEW THAT THE WHOLE RATIONALE REQUIRES RE-EXAMINATION. FIRST, I QUESTION WHETHER IT IS TECHNICALLY NECESSARY TO INSTALL EQUIPMENT IN OUR EMBASSIES THAT CANNOT BE SERVICED BY LOCAL P & T TECHNICIANS. THERE ARE PHONE TROUBLES ENOUGH HERE EVEN WHEN LOCAL SERVICE IS AVAILABLE (SUCH AS IN OUR RESIDENCES), BUT IT IS IMPOSSIBLE WHEN WE HAVE AN EXOTIC SYSTEM THAT NO ONE CAN MAINTAIN OR REPAIR. SECOND, I QUESTION WHETHER IT IS NECESSARY ON SECURITY GROUNDS TO INSTALL SUCH TELEPHONE EQUIPMENT IN OUR EMBASSIES AND WHETHER IT IS NECESSARY TO SHUN LOCAL P & T SERVICE.

7. THIS EMBASSY WASTES AN ENORMOUS AMOUNT OF TIME COPING WITH A BROKEN DOWN PHONE SYSTEM. UNLESS REALLY COMPELLING REASONS EXIST FOR THE PRESENT SITUATION, I BELIEVE THE DEPARTMENT SHOULD EXAMINE CLOSELY THE RATIONALE FOR CONTINUING THIS WASTEFUL, FRUSTRATING, INEFFECTIVE SYSTEM OF EXOTIC PHONE INSTALLATIONS

DEPENDENT FOR MAINTENANCE AND INSTALLATION ON A TOTALLY
INADEQUATE STAFF BASED HUNDREDS (THOUSANDS?) OF MILES AWAY IN
ANOTHER COUNTRY.STOKES

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Decaption Note:
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Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
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Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: TLELEPHONES
TAGS: AMTC, ASEC, LT
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